



# Chapter 14

## Assessment for Learning: A Framework for Educators' Professional Growth and Evaluation Cycles

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**Abstract** Research in the area of classroom assessment for learning (AfL)—in which students are deeply involved in the formative assessment process—is not only extensive, it is also overwhelmingly positive in terms of its impact on student learning and achievement. This chapter focusses on the authors' work with schools and systems where AfL strategies have been deliberately used with adults in support of professional growth and change. The authors provide examples from the perspective of professional growth and evaluation cycles for teachers and school principals. Whether in a school or a large school system, these two Canadian examples illustrate the use of assessment in the service of adult learning, including redefining reliable and valid evidence of adult learning. Experience across multiple schools and school systems has shown that the deliberate alignment of actions from the classroom to the system—particularly in the areas of evaluation and professional growth—positively implicates and impacts everyone's learning.

### 14.1 Introduction

Quality assessment practices, when used thoughtfully, can transform evaluation<sup>1</sup> and professional growth processes of teachers, principals, and others.<sup>2</sup> As we consider the role of assessment in the service of student learning—clearly articulating quality and proficiency, using those descriptions to engage in self-regulation

<sup>1</sup>Policy documents in Canada often refer to the term 'teacher supervision', rather than 'teacher evaluation'. However, for the international audience, the latter will be used in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Many educational professionals in public school systems (teachers and principals) are unionized across Canada.

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and triangulating evidence of learning—we recognize the ways in which these principles can be used effectively to support adult learning. This looks to be a ‘no brainer’, as a Superintendent recently said to us. But if it is a ‘no brainer’, then:

- Why does it seem that the principles of assessment in the service of learning are relegated mostly to the world of the classroom—to be employed by teachers as they teach students?
- Why are parallel expectations and actions across an organization and its roles and responsibilities—alignment—so difficult to systemically and deeply achieve in relation to AfL?
- Why is proof of success often limited to numerical data, rather than being comprised of evidence from multiple sources collected over time?

School systems employ teachers and principals and a wide range of other staff.<sup>3</sup> The employee–employer relationship, while collaborative is nonetheless hierarchical. Just as classroom teachers are required to evaluate students at times prescribed by policy, leaders, such as principals (who must evaluate teachers) and superintendents (who must evaluate teachers and/or principals), do so at times and in ways prescribed by policy. Policies govern both evaluation and professional growth cycle processes. While both processes support the learning and development of educators, they have distinct purposes. As noted in one school district policy document, evaluation and professional growth are ‘intended to assist teachers in meeting their professional responsibilities and to enhance teaching knowledge, skills and attributes that maximize student learning’ (Edmonton Public Schools 2015, Policy FGCA.AR). The result of both, when done well, is learning.

The evaluation and professional growth cycles are necessarily different. The evaluation cycle, as dictated by policy, is a time of professional appraisal, whereby the employer or supervisor makes a professional judgment regarding the employee’s level of performance. This is just like the classroom teacher who, as dictated by policy, must make a professional judgment of students’ levels of performance on report cards. Professional judgment, in both cases, is informed by one’s knowledge of context, evidence of learning, methods of collecting evidence, and the criteria and standards that describe success. ‘In professional practice, judgement involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction’ (Ministry of Education of Ontario 2010, p. 152). Both the professional growth and evaluation cycles are a time of learning; however, the former does not require evaluative and summative statements from the supervisor. Yet, both can occur through multiple opportunities and learning pathways that address the uniqueness of each adult learner and enable choice, while affirming a common learning destination.

The balance between the evaluation and professional growth cycles can be delicate—one of supporting learning without judgment and yet, when required,

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<sup>3</sup>A school system is defined, for example, by its capacity to direct policy development, hire and evaluate staff. In Canada, public school systems vary in size up to 250,000 students (595 schools).



66 making a judgment, an evaluation. There often seems to be an assumption that the  
67 evaluation cycle is ‘higher stakes’ than the professional growth cycle, yet policies  
68 related to professional growth in numerous Canadian jurisdictions such as British  
69 Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, clearly articulate a  
70 requirement that evidence of professional learning be shown to a supervisor at times  
71 and in a manner articulated in policy.

72 Readers need to note that we are deliberately using the language of schools and  
73 systems in order to bridge the understandings of the past with the realities of edu-  
74 cation today. For example, we are not using ‘professional development’ and ‘pro-  
75 fessional growth’ as synonyms, as the former is most often referred to as a structure  
76 or opportunity for learning (e.g., workshop, institute, course, or Professional  
77 Learning Community meetings) while professional growth refers to the learning that  
78 takes place. ‘Evaluation Cycle’ is a time dictated in policy where the employer  
79 makes a determination regarding the employee’s level of performance.

80 The assumptions that underlie this work in Canada have been changing. In the  
81 past, some practices were more typical and now new practices are emerging. Some  
82 examples include:

- 83 • In the past, teachers evaluated everything. Today, teachers are more likely to  
84 evaluate less and spend more time using AfL—formative assessment plus the  
85 deep involvement of learners in the assessment process—to support all learners.
- 86 • In the past, professional development tended to be more directed and focussed  
87 on ‘delivery’ of information and knowledge whereas now there is more likely to  
88 be an emphasis on professional growth—the construction of knowledge through  
89 multiple opportunities, varied learning styles, and multiple learning pathways  
90 that address the uniqueness of each adult learner and enable choice while  
91 affirming a common learning destination.
- 92 • In the past, teachers’ professional judgment was considered by many to be ‘in  
93 place’ by virtue of qualifying for a teaching credential. These days, ‘informed  
94 professional judgment’ is coming to be viewed as an ongoing learning process  
95 that reflects professional knowledge of performance expectations, context,  
96 evidence of learning, methods of collecting evidence, and the criterion standards  
97 that indicate success.
- 98 • In the past, evaluation of educators was often about making a judgment—was  
99 the teacher fit to teach? Was the school principal fit to lead? Currently, even if  
100 one is on an evaluation cycle, there is a growing tendency for learning to be the  
101 expectation and, therefore, AfL principles still apply. While distinct, there is a  
102 growing interest in working to ensure evaluation and the professional growth  
103 cycles also support teacher learning and development by teachers, principals,  
104 superintendents, and others.
- 105 • In the past, it was assumed that only the educator involved in the professional  
106 growth or evaluation cycle was going to learn. Now, more and more leaders,  
107 understand that the learner, the evaluator or supervisor, and the system itself can  
108 learn as a result of these processes.



- In the past, numerical data alone seemed to be valued. Now policy in many jurisdictions articulates that evidence of learning must be triangulated, that is, collected from multiple sources—products, conversations, and observation—and collected over time.

Too often in education, system priorities seem to suggest impact merely at the classroom level. ‘To expect only classroom teachers to shift in their work in the absence of systemic realignment is to separate the interdependent parts of the whole’ (Davies et al. 2012b, p. 18). However, recent research suggests, ‘when leaders employ the tenets of AfL as their leadership stance and actions, they exert their leadership in incredibly impactful ways’ (Davies et al. 2014, pp. 588–589). Therefore, the ‘no-brainer’ that is often referred to and consigned to the classroom can, in fact, transform traditional teacher professional growth and evaluation processes. AfL strategies can be deliberately used with adults in support of growth and change in schools and systems if key guidelines related to quality classroom assessment such as triangulated evidence of learning are met. In this chapter, we illustrate that although the purposes for educator professional growth and evaluation cycles may be different (Marzano and Toth 2013), they can, in fact, both be informed by, and use, the principles of AfL.

## 14.2 Research Foundation

Since Black and Wiliam’s (1998) study, AfL has increasingly become the focus of professional learning for teachers. Their research claims that AfL has the greatest impact on student learning and achievement ever documented have served as a catalyst for moving classroom assessment to the centre of the educational agenda. And while their findings have been challenged (Bennett 2011), policy documents continue to acknowledge the importance of formative assessment and involving students in the assessment process (Hawai’i Department of Education 2014; Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth 2006<sup>4</sup>; Ministry of Education, Ontario 2010).

Over the past thirty years, classroom assessment has become a recognized field separate from measurement and evaluation (Chappuis et al. 2012; Crooks 1988; Davies 2011; Natriello 1987; Stiggins and Bridgeford 1985). Quality classroom assessment:

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<sup>4</sup>In December 1993, the ministers responsible for education in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon Territory, and Northwest Territories signed the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (WNCPE), Kindergarten to Grade 12. In February 2000, Nunavut also joined WNCPE. In 2006, Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth published the policy statement referred to here about assessment and evaluation on behalf of the WNCPE.

- Requires teachers to know and understand the relevant standards/outcomes and agreed-upon statements of quality,
- Uses evidence of learning collected from multiple sources over time,
- Involves AfL to engage the learner and support ongoing learning, and
- Depends upon informed professional judgment rather than external measures (Davies 2011; Davies et al. 2012a, b; Herbst and Davies 2014).

Researchers have shown that when teachers use AfL, students learn more and teaching becomes more effective (Allal 2010; Andrade and Cizek 2010; Andrade 2013). There is also a growing body of research focussed on the power of using AfL in support of adult learning (e.g., Boud et al. 2015; Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith 2013; Sadler 2013). Further, as systems have moved to greater fidelity with the recommendations arising from research related to assessment in the service of learning, researchers have also engaged in examining the system-level implementation process. For example, Gardner (2012) and James et al. (2007) documented implementation across schools and groups of schools in the United Kingdom. Swaffield (2013) and Swaffield and MacBeath (2008) worked with school leaders internationally studying the leadership required for successful implementation of AfL across classrooms and schools. In 2014, we reported on longitudinal research related to using AfL as both the change itself and the way to achieve the change result across a school system (Davies et al. 2014). It documented that positional leaders found more success when they themselves used AfL to support the system-learning initiative. Three of the actions related to AfL that leaders used are relevant to the topics of teacher evaluation and teachers' professional growth:

- Use AfL as a leadership tool (showing samples, co-constructing criteria, coming to common agreement around quality) to do the work they are meant to do,
- Model and coach others using AfL principles, structures, and strategies,
- Use AfL principles, structures, and strategies with every group implicated in the system-learning initiative (students, teachers, administrators, trustees, parents, unions) (Davies et al. 2014).

### 14.3 Two Examples of Educator Professional Growth and Evaluation

In this chapter, we present two examples of educator professional growth and evaluation from different perspectives. One is a system leader—a superintendent—supervising a principal (Manitoba) and the other is a school principal supervising a group of teachers (British Columbia). The actions taken include (Davies 2011):

- Beginning with the end in mind,
- Describing quality,



- 181 • Triangulating evidence of learning,
- 182 • Engaging the learner in the classroom assessment process,
- 183 • Evaluating and reporting the learning.
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185 When district and school leaders apply the practices typical of quality classroom  
186 assessment to their work in the area of professional growth and evaluation cycles,  
187 they promote alignment. In the following sections, each of the five actions men-  
188 tioned above is illustrated through two vignettes—one concerning the experience of  
189 the superintendent, the other the experience of the principal. These vignettes are  
190 based on multiple observations and conversations from our work with school and  
191 system leaders (Davies et al. 2014).

### 192 **14.3.1 Beginning with the End in Mind**

193 As these two examples show, preparation for either the professional growth or  
194 evaluation cycle requires precision of purpose and goal; the ‘where we are going’ is  
195 necessary to reach success. Taking time to determine just what the teacher and the  
196 principal want to learn as a result of professional inquiry, or what the foci of the  
197 evaluation process are, is a critical first step. This is no different than in classrooms  
198 with students. Whereas both students and teachers are informed through the  
199 assessment and evaluation process, the teacher has the professional responsibility to  
200 make the final evaluation that is then recorded and reported. Part of the process is  
201 being clear about what is to be learned; that is, what knowledge, understanding,  
202 application, and articulation need to be shared and demonstrated? When the out-  
203 comes are clear, this clarity can later be used to inform the professional judgment of  
204 the supervisor against the identified learning outcomes being made.

#### 205 **14.3.1.1 Superintendent**

206 A principal of five years’ experience began her sixth year with a meeting with the  
207 superintendent. It was the year of formal evaluation, as prescribed by policy, and  
208 this initial conversation was meant to set the stage for what was to come. Together,  
209 they reviewed the school plan results from the past couple of years, the district  
210 document outlining the indicators of effective leadership, and the statements of  
211 professional growth from the past two years. Consequently, the principal identified  
212 a characteristic of leadership that she wished to focus on during the upcoming year  
213 (modelling the school’s values and practices) and included outcome statements  
214 connected to both teacher and student learning and achievement. More specifically,  
215 the latter iterated itself in an increase in the percentage of students who were  
216 reading at or above Grade 7 level. From the superintendent’s perspective, these  
217 areas of foci aligned with the district priorities; however, he added one additional  
218 attribute from the district document—buffering staff from distractions to their



219 work—and one related to mathematical achievement for students, based on a trend  
220 noted in the provincial assessment results.

### 221 14.3.1.2 Principal

222 In one school, the school's learning goal related to the board priority focussed on  
223 AfL. All teachers, whether on a professional growth or evaluation cycle, identified  
224 their own professional growth plans to learn more about beliefs, attitudes, and  
225 practices regarding classroom assessment. The group of teachers in their evaluation  
226 year then met with the principal one-on-one. The principal outlined the process,  
227 making links to the classroom assessment process explicit. Each teacher was asked  
228 to reflect on his/her current classroom assessment practice, reviewing evidence of  
229 his/her learning and improvement in relation to the criteria established.

230 Notice the stakes for showing learning improvements are different, depending on  
231 whether the teacher or the principal is on an evaluation cycle or a learning cycle.

## 232 14.3.2 Describing Quality

233 Just as students ask 'What do you want?' or 'How good is good enough?', edu-  
234 cators also ask 'What does excellence look like?'. A second similarity in both  
235 examples is the need to get to a degree of specificity regarding what quality and  
236 proficiency are. Statements of effective teaching, or leadership practice, or district  
237 priority statements often define what one should be able to do *without* communi-  
238 cating what it looks like when that is attained. So just as teachers work to look at  
239 samples and other data to inform students' expected levels of quality, educators  
240 engage in similar processes to more fully understand what is expected of them in  
241 terms of 'What does it look like when I learn more about \_\_\_\_\_ in my professional  
242 inquiry?' or 'What can a distinguished level of teaching and leading look like in  
243 relation to \_\_\_\_\_?'. The responses to these questions serve both the educator  
244 and/or the person who is responsible for the evaluation process. It means that there  
245 is enough detail and information so that educators can coach themselves and others,  
246 regardless of current understanding or performance, towards success.

### 247 14.3.2.1 Superintendent

248 The purpose of the next meeting between the superintendent and the principal was  
249 to build a list for each of the two characteristics selected (see below). Certainly, the  
250 district's document provided some clarity, but the process of collaboratively  
251 describing what each meant garnered greater precision and ownership. The dialogue  
252 clearly identified what each person viewed as quality and proficiency. There was no  
253 longer room for supposition or assumption.



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## Descriptions of Quality of the Two Leadership Areas of Focus in the Evaluation Cycle

### Model the School's Values and Practices

- Demonstrate sound understanding of current pedagogy and curriculum in reading and mathematics
- Ensure assessment and evaluation practices throughout the school are equitable and appropriate
- Ensure instructional practices use appropriate pedagogy to respond to different needs of learners
- Recognize the potential of new and emerging research in instruction and assessment
- Model professional learning to staff, students, community
- Collaborate during planning cycles
- Analyse a wide range of evidence to determine school progress and growth.

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### Buffer Staff from Distractions

- Use professional judgment to determine what is brought to staff
- Minimize distractions and disruptions to instructional time
- Engage in collaborative decision making to respond to external requests and initiatives
- Monitor staff participation in out-of-school and non-instructional activities
- Review the ways in which out-of-classroom events and activities contribute to students' learning needs or curricular expectations.

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### 14.3.2.2 Principal

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The group of teachers on the professional growth cycle made plans on their own and with each other about their expected learning outcomes and the commensurate student learning outcomes. They also identified types of learning strategies and actions in which they would engage in order to meet their learning goals.

The teaching staff on the evaluation cycle, along with the principal, developed a list of what was important. They were asked to examine their own teaching, learning, and assessment practices and to consider the practices of others; they read professional materials and current research to inform their understanding; they worked as a group to build common understandings. They talked about the important role of assessment and of the role of student evidence in assessing effective teaching—that what is learned is a more important assessment of teaching effectiveness than something merely being taught or 'covered'. They created a comprehensive list with a great diversity of ideas represented. They grouped similar ideas together. Participants worked together to identify criteria by expressing the big idea of each grouping in summary form in an easy-to-understand phrase.



295 The next step was to list all the possible evidence for each criterion of the learning  
296 destination.

297 Each of the two examples clearly articulates what is to be learned or what is to be  
298 present in the teaching or leading. Once the level of quality has been described, the  
299 next step is the selection of evidence of learning.

### 300 **14.3.3 Triangulated Evidence of Learning**

301 Whether it is learning, progress, growth, or the expected levels of performance that  
302 have increased or been met, the identification of evidence is key. When there is a  
303 plan to collect evidence of learning from multiple sources over time in relation to  
304 what needs to be learned or achieved, the findings are more likely to be reliable and  
305 valid than the more limited data sets that have traditionally been used in profes-  
306 sional learning or evaluation cycles.

#### 307 **14.3.3.1 Superintendent**

308 And finally, for each of the leadership areas of focus and the student achievement  
309 outcomes, the two jointly created a list of potential evidence that could be collected  
310 in order to prove that the characteristics and the student learning outcomes had been  
311 met (see below). This conversation was critical—not only to the process but to the  
312 commitment of alignment that the school district had made to its staff and partners.  
313 This list was no longer one dimensional. Rather, it was to be triangulated at its core.  
314 No longer were students judged only on a limited set of evidence and the same was  
315 true for the principal. Her performance would be judged on evidence from multiple  
316 sources—products, observations, and conversations.

#### 317 **List of Potential Evidence to Be Gathered Related to the Two Areas of Focus in** 318 **the Evaluation Cycle**

- 319 • Discussion regarding analysis of school evidence
- 320 • Visual representation of school-based evidence
- 321 • Planning notes for collaborative planning cycles
- 322 • Staff interviews
- 323 • Professional growth plan
- 324 • Reflections on professional growth and notes regarding recent pedagogies,  
325 research examined
- 326 • Pictures and videos of students and teachers at work
- 327 • Discussions regarding decision-making processes about what is brought to staff  
328 and what is not brought to staff
- 329 • Samples of what has been brought to staff and what has not been brought
- 330 • Recording notes regarding out-of-classroom activities and events.



### 14.3.3.2 Principal

Teachers on the professional growth cycle identified triangulated evidence of success that they would use themselves to monitor their progress and could share with their colleagues and principal during biannual ‘check-in’ conversations.

The teachers in the evaluation cycle also considered and listed all possible products, conversations, and observations—anything that could be considered proof of learning. The principal prompted the individual conversations by asking questions such as: ‘What would you see if you spent time observing in the classroom?’, ‘What would you hear?’, ‘What would students say?’, ‘What would parents say?’, ‘What kind of products might be collected?’, ‘What form might they take?’, ‘Who might collect them?’, and ‘When?’. The list of evidence was far more than what could be collected through three formal observations made by the principal. It was obvious that both the teacher being evaluated and the principal doing the evaluation would be engaged in ongoing evidence collection during the year. During the next meeting, the teacher and the principal both brought forward evidence to finalize the baseline evidence collection regarding strengths and goals for improvement.

It is evident that the educators in both examples deliberately planned to collect evidence from multiple sources in relation to the learning focus—an essential aspect of validity.

### 14.3.4 *Learners Active and Engaged During the Process*

In both examples, the learner–educator is the central focus of the process. The educator being evaluated is involved in directing their own next learning steps in relation to the goals set and the descriptions of quality and proficiency established. The educator is deliberately collecting the evidence of learning. In a formal evaluation cycle, the supervisor also gathers evidence.

#### 14.3.4.1 Superintendent

Now that the superintendent and the principal had established a focus for the evaluation cycle, the times they had spent, both together and individually, in that pursuit were focussed and aligned.

The superintendent created a timeline of evidence collection. The evidence, as noted earlier, went beyond observations that were general in nature but would serve the areas of growth that had been identified. These included interactions between staff and students in pursuit of the learning achievement targets. Documents and products were also gathered.

Every other month during the ten-month school year, the superintendent sat with the principal and posed two types of questions. The first centred on what the principal had been doing and learning in relation to the areas of focus. ‘What



368 actions have you engaged into build your understanding, and what have you done  
369 toward the leadership characteristics and the student achievement targets?' 'What  
370 new thinking has emerged for you as you have examined the evidence you have  
371 been collecting or as you have taken part in both formal and informal learning  
372 opportunities?'. The second type of question emphasized the principal's interpretation  
373 of the evidence that the superintendent had collected. Examples included:  
374 'What are you noticing about...?', 'What patterns and trends are you seeing as you  
375 look through...?'. When reviewing the evidence, the superintendent did not offer  
376 his interpretation but rather encouraged the principal to make meaning herself.

377 The principal carefully considered the criteria for each of the characteristics. As  
378 she reflected on her practice, she identified ways that would help her learn more.  
379 This included reading professional articles, watching videos of teachers, students,  
380 and leaders in action, attending professional learning sessions, and, for her and most  
381 importantly, networking with her valued colleagues. She also consciously created a  
382 timeline to collect the evidence that had been identified at the outset, including  
383 baseline student evidence, professional journal entries, and conversational data  
384 from teachers and students. Preparation for regular meetings with the superintendent  
385 was minimal, as the focus of these meetings was to reflect on the evidence  
386 collected since the previous meeting.

#### 387 **14.3.4.2 Principal**

388 During the individual biannual meetings between teachers in their professional  
389 growth cycle and the principal, the evidence teachers were collecting in relation to  
390 their personal learning goals was shared. The principal asked questions to stimulate  
391 the conversation, such as, 'What does this evidence tell you about what you are  
392 learning?', 'In what ways does your learning support district priorities?', or 'What  
393 would you like to learn more about?'. These questions are not evaluative in nature;  
394 rather, they consistently turn the learning back to the teacher him- or herself.

395 After the evidence of learning had been collected from multiple sources over  
396 time, principal and teachers in the evaluation cycle met individually and discussed  
397 what the evidence signified. Teachers kept a professional portfolio modelled after  
398 the student portfolios focussed on growth over time in relation to the learning goals,  
399 showing both beginning evidence and evidence of change over time. One common  
400 self-assessment reflection frame used was, 'I used to... and now I...'. They  
401 recorded, either in print or digital media, the changes that had occurred over time in  
402 terms of student learning and adult learning. They described the ways their teaching  
403 practices had improved. They also identified possible next steps for improvement  
404 and set plans for future professional growth. One teacher, having been part of  
405 numerous discussions regarding evidence-based professional learning, chose to  
406 build the central collection of evidence around three students' work samples. She  
407 deliberately selected a student who was excelling, one who was on track to do well,  
408 and one student who needed significant learning support. The portfolio initially  
409 consisted of baseline collections of student evidence for each student that included



410 observations, conversations, and products related to literacy and numeracy. At the  
411 end of the first term, another collection for each of the same three students was  
412 added. The teacher presented an analysis of the growth and development of each of  
413 the three students over the term. This process was repeated at the end of each term  
414 throughout the school year.

415 The principal posed questions that allowed each teacher to examine more closely  
416 the triangulated evidence that had been collected. Toward the end, the teacher  
417 finalized the collection of evidence ensuring it was collected from multiple sources  
418 —products, observations, and focussed conversations. The principal and teacher  
419 met and reviewed the evidence. The principal asked questions seeking to under-  
420 stand how the evidence showed the teacher’s learning and work towards the goals  
421 set at the beginning.

422 In both cases, the evidence is examined on a regular basis. Consequently,  
423 immediate adjustments to next learning steps are made. During the professional  
424 growth cycle, the supervisor acts as a coach and a facilitator. During the evaluation  
425 cycle, the supervisor is also a coach and a facilitator and, when it is time, is required  
426 to make an evaluation and to record and report it to the organization. Notice that the  
427 role of coach and facilitator allows for the supervisor to also learn about their role  
428 specifically and their role in adult learning; performance management literature  
429 refers to this as ‘reverse feedback’.

### 430 ***14.3.5 Evaluating and Reporting the Learning***

431 In the examples of the professional growth cycle, it is the teachers, themselves, who  
432 establishes summary statements of what has been learned and how, while high-  
433 lighting the evidence of that learning. In the example of the principal and teacher  
434 evaluation cycle, the supervisor evaluated the evidence; that is, he/she appraised the  
435 evidence with respect to excellence or merit. Each exerted their professional  
436 judgment in relation to these questions:

- 437 1. What does the adult learner know and what is she/he able to do, and articulate?
- 438 2. What areas require further attention or development?
- 439 3. In what ways can his/her learning be supported?
- 440 4. How is he/she progressing in relation to the set learning goals?

#### 441 **14.3.5.1 Superintendent**

442 At the end of the evaluation cycle, the final report, though penned by the super-  
443 intendent, held no surprises for the principal. Because the principal had participated  
444 in identifying the areas of focus and collaborated in developing the descriptors of  
445 excellence, she knew what was expected. Throughout the year, she was engaged in  
446 reviewing evidence collected by another, and she was implicated in gathering



447 evidence herself. She then reflected on what the evidence pointed to as next possible  
448 steps of learning, action, regulation, and intention. As a direct result, the  
449 evaluative statements and judgments of her performance and practice as a principal  
450 were not based on a narrow band of data. Patterns, trends, and gaps were rooted in  
451 the triangulated evidence collected over time.

#### 452 **14.3.5.2 Principal**

453 At the end of the year, the teachers in the professional growth cycle shared  
454 end-of-year statements and reflections with each other and with their principal.  
455 They summarized the learning that had taken place, identified areas of potential  
456 next steps, and reviewed the evidence that they themselves had collected.

457 For the teachers in the evaluation cycle, the principal reflected on the year's  
458 entire collection of evidence, including the notes from the meetings that had  
459 occurred over the year. The process of making a professional judgment—the  
460 evaluation—was supported through the criteria that had been set earlier.

461 Decisions were made about how the evidence best demonstrated what had been  
462 learned. The principal was able to exert professional judgment with confidence as a  
463 result of being engaged in learning, studying district policy and regulations, as well  
464 as experiencing a similar process for the principal appraisal process. The series of  
465 learning experiences set out by the district to explain and model the teacher evaluation  
466 process, including analysing classroom video footage, using the district's  
467 revised classroom walk-through process with colleagues, being mentored while  
468 serving as an assistant principal also made this process more likely to be implemented.  
469 Because of deliberate alignment, the process this principal followed was  
470 the same process district principals used to evaluate the work of district staff and the  
471 same process the superintendent used to supervise principals.

472 What made a quality teacher evaluation report was clear to all because the  
473 leadership team at the district level had examined samples of reports and  
474 co-constructed criteria. That said, every teacher's evaluation report was a different  
475 kind of challenge.

476 Once the evaluation report was drafted, the principal again sat beside each  
477 teacher in the evaluation cycle and reviewed the draft report and the evidence  
478 collected. There was an opportunity for the teacher to ask clarifying questions and  
479 make suggestions. Then, the principal finalized the report and submitted it to the  
480 superintendent.

481 In this school system, there is an expectation that the adults share their progress,  
482 experiences, and results with others in the school community, just as students share  
483 evidence of their learning with teachers and parents. So, when the evaluation  
484 process was finalized and final meetings had occurred with those in the professional  
485 growth cycle, teachers were invited to share evidence of learning as part of the  
486 school's collection of evidence. This complete collection was shared with the Board  
487 of Trustees as part of the data of school board achievement and success.



488 Note that in both examples, collections of evidence were reviewed and examined  
489 in relation to the initial goal or focus. Together the leader and adult learner, or the  
490 adult learner him/herself, reviewed the triangulated collection of evidence collected  
491 over time. In the examination of this evidence, they considered ‘best evidence’ in  
492 terms of validity and reliability.

## 493 **14.4 From Challenges to Opportunities—Alignment** 494 **of Purpose and Action**

495 The origin of the term ‘principal’ was ‘principal teacher’. Principals and superin-  
496 tendents were seen to be teachers of teachers. Recognizing that part of one’s  
497 leadership role is that of ‘teacher’ can shift one’s thinking regarding the learning of  
498 others (Senge 1990). Researchers have emphasized the importance of school and  
499 system leaders understanding AfL and being supportive of its use as a key  
500 instructional strategy (Assessment Reform Group 2002; Black et al. 2003; James  
501 et al. 2007). Recent teacher evaluation research questions current practices and  
502 examines new challenges as a result of calls to use the evaluations in increasingly  
503 impactful ways (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2013; Marzano and Toth 2013;  
504 Stiggins 2014). And, as research related to positional leaders is beginning to show,  
505 the deliberate use of assessment for adult and school learning positively impacts the  
506 learning of adults and systems (Davies et al. 2014).

507 As these two examples illustrate, the actions and strategies of quality assessment  
508 most often spoken about in the context of the classroom can be present in the  
509 context of educator professional growth and evaluation. This does not occur by  
510 chance or as an unintended, yet positive, outcome. Rather, these systems, whether a  
511 school or a district, have consciously determined to:

- 512 • Describe quality and proficiency,
- 513 • Expand proof of success,
- 514 • Provide opportunities for learning for all.

### 515 **14.4.1 Describe Quality and Proficiency**

516 In the past, there were often no descriptions of quality and proficiency, and the  
517 learning focus was not clear to the learners. Principals and other leaders did not  
518 always show samples or describe quality. Now clearly defined and agreed upon  
519 indicators of quality and proficiency are being developed to bring clarity and  
520 transparency not only to student learning but also to the professional growth and  
521 evaluation cycles.



## 14.4.2 Expand Proof of Learning

In the past, teachers evaluated many specific things and leaders used primarily external scores to determine degrees of success. Today, teachers deliberately evaluate less and spend more time using AfL—formative assessment plus the deep involvement of learners in the assessment process—to support all learners. Now, supervisors also need to learn how to expand proof of learning to support adult learners.

Stiggins (2014) presents an analysis of the kinds of evidence being collected for the purposes of teacher evaluation, including student level data. He summarizes by stating that the evidence typically collected at this point is ‘too thin’. Marzano and Toth (2013) also proposed the evidence being collected should increase in breadth and depth. Darling-Hammond et al. (2012) suggested that teacher evaluation should use professional standards as the source of evidence. They stated:

These standards have become the basis for assessments of teaching that produce ratings that are much more stable than value-added measures. At the same time, these standards incorporate classroom evidence of student learning, and large-scale studies have shown that they can predict teachers’ value-added effectiveness (National Research Council 2008; Wilson et al. 2011), so they have helped ground evaluation in student learning in more stable ways.

We would argue that social science research methods provide a helpful framework for thinking about evidence of learning that is both reliable and valid because it is collected in relation to expectations and standards and arises over time from multiple sources—products, observations, and conversations. This research framework for classroom assessment has a rich history in Canada, dating back to a 1989 curriculum foundation document in British Columbia (Ministry of Education, British Columbia 1989). Triangulating evidence of learning to increase reliability and validity has since gained currency across Canada (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth [WNCPC] 2006; Ministry of Education, Ontario 2010).

This classroom assessment perspective acknowledges the complexity of the learning environment and the necessity to collect reliable and valid evidence of learning. All types of learning require evidence of learning that goes beyond common assessments or external measurement data. Rather, quality depends upon the collection and use of a continuous stream of information (both qualitative and quantitative) if feedback is to be specific, if change is to be supported, and if learning is to be successful. This is essential to the inquiry-based nature of successful professional learning at the individual, school, and system levels. Further, research shows that teachers, leaders, and systems learn more (Davies et al. 2014), when leaders:

- Require triangulated evidence of learning from all levels of the system (system, school, appraisal level, and classroom level),
- Transform external pressures (e.g., data from external sources to the school and/or system) into powerful supports for Assessment for Learning goals,



- 564 • Value both qualitative and quantitative evidence as proof of student, adult,  
565 school, and system learning,
- 566 • Model triangulating evidence of learning to inform their own work.

#### 567 **14.4.3 Provide Opportunities for Learning for All**

568 In the past, evaluation cycles were not codified to include professional growth  
569 cycles—they evolved because there was little opportunity for teachers to continue  
570 their learning within the organization except under the umbrella of the evaluation  
571 cycle. The evaluation cycle tended to occur infrequently and was not sufficient.  
572 Now both professional growth cycles and evaluation cycles are more likely to be  
573 valued.

574 Furthermore, in the past, the evaluation cycle was seen to be punitive—some-  
575 thing ‘done to others’. Yet, when evaluation takes place in the context of assess-  
576 ment and evaluation that supports learning, adult learners experience the best of  
577 classroom assessment and evaluation, i.e., *tight* support and *loose* pressure.  
578 Therefore, there is a clear need to help everyone involved in the professional growth  
579 and the evaluation cycles understand ways assessment can be used to support the  
580 learning of adults, as they both provide opportunities to contribute to everyone’s  
581 learning.

582 In recent years, there has been a clear shift from professional development  
583 ‘activities’ to evidence-based professional growth (Darling-Hammond et al. 2012;  
584 Guskey 2002; Timperley 2008). This perspective has become more common as  
585 illustrated by Mishkind (2014) when she states, ‘High-quality, evidence-based  
586 professional development is an ongoing and iterative process grounded in student  
587 data. The only real goal of professional learning is to build educator knowledge and  
588 skills that will directly impact student learning: their strengths, goals, and  
589 instructional needs’ (p. 8).

590 Teacher evaluation is also an opportunity for leaders to coach, providing  
591 specific, descriptive feedback, so teachers find more success. Teacher evaluation is  
592 a time when teachers and leaders review professional practice in light of specific  
593 goals. Recently, in North America, teacher evaluation has become a ‘hot topic’ in  
594 educational circles as initiatives related to merit pay move forward, with many  
595 writing about how to do it well (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2013;  
596 Darling-Hammond et al. 2012; Marzano and Toth 2013; Stiggins 2014). Often  
597 teacher evaluation fails to be viewed in the context of system learning and within  
598 the structure that quality assessment provides. This is also true for school and  
599 system leaders.

600 AfL as a transformative tool for schools and school systems is receiving more  
601 attention (Davies et al. 2012b; James et al. 2007; Swaffield 2013; Townsend et al.  
602 2010). It has long been acknowledged that schools and systems need to learn  
603 (Senge 1990) and systems are composed of people as well as policy, procedures,



604 regulations, and protocols. It makes sense, therefore, that the learning of adults is  
605 also of primary importance for leaders. Leaders are being encouraged to use the  
606 practices of assessment for learning to support the learning of adults.

607 The two examples we have highlighted here show educators' professional  
608 growth cycles and evaluation cycles can both be used as an opportunity for system  
609 learning as the evaluators, the principal and the superintendent, also learn and, in  
610 turn, they can use their experiences to inform the larger school system.

## 611 14.5 Conclusion

612 When we first undertook our longitudinal study of professional learning and  
613 leadership more than fifteen years ago, we considered educator professional growth  
614 and evaluation as an important leadership task and a powerful leadership oppor-  
615 tunity. The examples included here illustrate what it can look like in action.  
616 Educator professional growth and evaluation cycles benefit from using the princi-  
617 ples of quality classroom assessment which are based upon agreed-upon statements  
618 of quality, evidence of learning collected from multiple sources over time, and AfL  
619 that engages the learner and supports ongoing learning. Further, informed profes-  
620 sional judgment in relation to agreed-upon understandings of quality and the valued  
621 collaboration between the person being evaluated and the supervisor helps leaders  
622 provide tight support in the context of loose pressure. Using these principles of  
623 classroom assessment aligns priority, vision, and action across a school system, and  
624 as a result, leaders' actions are informed and impactful on student, adult, and system  
625 learning.

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